Seven

The Literary Techniques
Chapter seven

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The novel is the genre of imaginative literature that gives an artistic form to the relationship of man and society, by rendering a picture of real life. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines the novel as:

A fictitious prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity (1950, 1341).

In Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary, a greater stress is given to characterization in the definition of the novel:

A fictitious prose narrative or tale presenting a picture of real life, especially of the emotional crises in the life-history of the men and women portrayed (1985, 865).

For writing such 'a fictitious prose narrative', the novelist mostly adopts three basic methods. He can tell the story from the point of view of one of the participants or characters in the novel, using the first person pronoun 'I'. With regard to Indian fiction in
English, Meenakshi Mukerjee makes the following observation on the prevalence of the first person narrative:

The most recurrent technique in Indo-Anglian fiction has been that of the first person narrative.... Choosing the central character as the narrator solves the problem of point of view, a problem which Henry James discussed variously in terms of the "large lucid reflector" and the "central consciousness" (1971, 31).

The novelist may tell the story as an omniscient narrator. This technique is essentially a third person narrative. Rene Wellek considers this method as the conventional and the most natural mode:

The novelist can similarly tell a story without laying claim to having witnessed or participated in what he narrates. He can narrate in the third person, as the 'omniscient author'. This is undoubtedly the traditional and 'natural' mode of narration. The author is present at the side of his work, like the lecturer whose exposition accompanies the lantern slides or documentary film (1968, 222-223).

Moreover, omniscient narration is highly flexible, since there is no defined or prescribed limit as to what extent the narrator can share with the readers, what he considers as a subject of interest. Marjorie Boulton in
The Anatomy of the Novel discusses the greatest advantages of the omniscient narration in the following manner:

The omniscient narrator can comment on anything he likes to comment on; he can analyse motive more objectively than a character can; he can describe things no other person could really see, such as a man's terrors in solitary confinement, or a dream; he can set persons in a historical or sociological perspective with a grasp of essentials impossible to a person living through the events; he can relate characters and events to things that have not yet happened; he can throw in any cultural allusions his readers are likely to enjoy, and even, as Dickens often does, have jokes with the reader at the expense of the characters. He can contribute his own moral values, explicitly or by implication. He has the greatest freedom; his is the viewpoint of a wide-angled lens (1985, 39).

The novelist may also adopt another method called 'multiple viewpoint', as did William Faulkner, the American novelist. Several characters of his novel As I Lay Dying narrate the action in turn, seeing it from their own points of view. As William Kenney in his book How To Analyze Fiction points out, "... the novel as a whole contains no less than sixteen viewpoint characters; we see the action from the point of view of each one in turn" (1966, 55). A novelist can tell his story using any one of these methods or employ all the methods in a single work.
Nayantara Sahgal uses the first-person narrative in her maiden novel *A Time To Be Happy*. The narrator is not the central character of the novel but simply a storyteller who is closely connected with all the characters. As Meenakshi Mukerjee observes,

The narrator in Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time To Be Happy* is a middle-aged bachelor. He too is mainly a chronicler and not a direct participant in the events and his task is made easier by the fact that the central characters confide in him their innermost thoughts (1971, 49).

The narrator fills in the background information of most of the characters, thus helping in the novelist's portrayal of them. Even though the observer-narrator of the novel, an elderly Gandhian, says "This is really Sanad's story" (TH 6), he cannot help introducing his own story a little into it. However, there are occasions when he confesses to his readers his helplessness:

It is difficult to avoid the subject of oneself altogether in an account written in the first person, and especially in this one, as I was too close to the Shivpal family (TH 75).

The narrator's own story has nothing to do with the central theme of the novel. Yet it has some relevance to the setting of the novel, such as the narrator's own
response to the Gandhian call for service. His involvement in the national cause provides Sahgal, an occasion to present the political struggle for Independence in India as the background for Sanad's story.

Sahgal's latest novel, *Mistaken Identity*, just like her first novel, is written in the first person narrative. It is very different from the former work. Here, the central narrative is presented from the point of view of a narrator-participant, Bhushan Singh, who is the central character in the novel. It is 'autobiographical' in form, as Bhushan himself gives an account of his life to his compatriots in prison, in the form of several colourful episodes of his youth, culled out from his memory. The life stories of others -- his cell-mates, his mother, Razia his sweet heart, and other characters -- are presented through the main narrative of the protagonist. In his review of the novel, N.Manu Chakravarthy remarks:

The narrative runs backwards and forwards all through the novel to capture the movement in Bhushan's mind from the strange present to the fond past and the uncertain future (26.3 (1991):88).
In both her novels *A Time To Be Happy* and *Mistaken Identity* Sahgal withdraws herself from her works and lets the readers listen to the main narrative directly without intruding herself and the narrators in the novels take the readers along with them. Such a narrative technique renders the novel even more realistic. On the other hand, since it narrows down the perspective in any novel, to only one pair of eyes, it renders the account given, at times, one-sided and biased.

Sahgal prefers employment of a 'dual perspective' for her sixth novel *Rich Like Us*, where Sonali and Rose are the central characters. Sonali's experiences are narrated by herself in first person, while in some other chapters the omniscient third-person narrative is used to present the episodes that centre around Rose. Thus the narrator-participant's views are in a way, modified by the omniscient author's point of view. Thus, such a 'dual perspective' enables the readers to get a fairly complete picture of the experience of the group of men in the novel. M.K. Naik points out the advantage of the combination of two narrative strategies, which made *Rich Like Us* the most accomplished of Sahgal's works:

From the point of view of narrative strategy
Rich Like Us is perhaps the most accomplished of Mrs. Sahgal's novels so far.... This happy combination of the two methods enables the author to cover a wide canvas and frequently provides the reader with a dual perspective on situation and character (30.5 Sept.-Oct. 1987: 31).

Perhaps, such a narrative technique has been one of the factors, contributing to the success of the work which eventually won for the author prestigious awards mentioned in the second chapter.

In all her other novels, Sahgal uses only the third-person narrative, where the omniscient writer replaces the first-person narrator and enjoys a greater freedom to comment on the characters than the first person narrator. The omniscient author also uses a chief spokesman on her behalf in each novel, through whom she expresses her own point of view. For example, Rakesh in This Time of Morning, Vishal Dubey in Storm in Chandigarh, Simrit in The Day in Shadow and Anna Hansen in Plans for Departure function eventually as the mouthpieces of the author, in their comments on the personality of other characters and situations.

Being a competent craftsman in the sphere of Tamil fiction, Akilon too adopts such narrative techniques as
described above in his novels. In two of his novels, he employs the first-person narrative. In his novel Cinēkiti (The Girl Friend), Durai, the young writer and journalist, tells the story through the 'persona' of a narrator—participant who figures as a major character. Akilon expresses the difficulty he had in writing the work in the first-person narrative, even though he gained some valuable experience in his attempt, in his preface to Cinēkiti:

Only when I opened a part of the novel with 'I' as the narrator and completed writing it, did I realize the difficulty involved in this method. However, I understood also in resorting to the use of this method, there is the pleasant feeling of being very near and close to the readers, giving them an account of the narrative in person, face-to-face (1978, 3).

The narrative in the novel moves on smoothly with practically little interference from the author. In his introduction to the novel Dr. Mu. Varadharajan writes:

The story moves on in first person narrative as narrated by Durai, a writer and journalist. In a book which provides the opportunity to narrate the story in this manner, feelings can be poured out without any obstacles (1978, 5).
The story of Lalitha and her plight in an incompatible marriage is brought out through Durai, the narrator. Such a narrative technique is defective according to Dhandayuthum, as it lacks empathy and keeps the readers at a distance from the experiences of the main characters: "We cannot really feel the subtle feelings and inner conflicts of Lalitha and Narayanasami as the entire story is narrated only by Durai" (1977, 189).

Another novel in which Akilon employs such a first-person narrative is his highly autobiographical novella Kollaikkāran (The Bandit). Here a ten-year old boy narrates the feelings of his childhood encounter with a notorious bandit named Thalai Vetti Thangasami. Through the words of this boy, we come to know about his father, who is an officer of the government, and also a bandit whom the boy comes to know intimately as the latter is under the official custody of the former. The first-person account renders the narrative, extremely realistic, and hence interesting, to the readers. Just like the narrator in Sahgal's A Time To Be Happy, the narrator here too is not given any name, and he remains till the end an anonymous chronicler.
Akilon experiments with a new method in *Tunaivi* (The Consort) by introducing the "multiple viewpoint" (Ramalingam 1974, 44). It is not just one character but several characters who take their turn, to present the narrative in first person. Marjorie Boulton is of the opinion:

Telling a story from several points of view has obvious possibilities for representing characters in depth, or the ambiguities of life; it can thus add verisimilitude, contribute large-scale ironies, and perhaps give the relief of variety (1985, 40).

In *Tunaivi* all the major characters like Kalyani, Balachandran, Murugesan, Jambulingam, Santha and Sundari are the narrators figuring in the novel. Through the narration of each character, the physiognomy and psyche of the individual character including his or her conflicts, are revealed. Only in this novel did Akilon use such a narrative technique.

The points of view employed in Akilon's novels *Cinēkiti*, *Kollaikkāran* and *Tunaivi* are purely experimental. Having found such modes of narration too complex, Akilon naturally turned to the most traditional and convenient method of the omniscient author's third-
person narrative for the rest of his novels. In other words, he employs the first-person narrative only in the case of his short novels, but not in his lengthy works like Cittirap Pāvai (The Portrait of A Lady), Pāvai Viḷakku (The Maiden Lamp), Enke Pōkirom? (Whither are We Bound to?), Vālvu Enke? (Whither is Life?), Putu Vellam (The New Flood) and Pon Malar (The Golden Flower). Akilon probably uses the third-person narrative of an omniscient writer in the above novels, since he finds more space and time in them, to narrate, describe, summarise and comment on the various events at leisure. It should also be noted that, quite often, the central characters in these works function as the mouthpieces of the author himself.

Sahgal and Akilon are daring writers who are bold enough to experiment with new modes of narration, thereby lending novelty and variety to their fiction. The single point of view presented through a first-person narrative, limits the field under observation, in contrast to the more comprehensive mode of narration of the 'multiple viewpoint'.

As regards common 'motifs', Sahgal and Akilon resort to the use of epistles in the crucial contexts.
of their narratives. For example, in Sahgal's *Plans for Departure*, Stella Brewster's sudden absence from Himapur for more than nine months remains a mystery and so everyone there including Anna Hansen, who has a high regard for Henry Brewster, suspects Brewster to be the murderer of his wife, and in this work, Sahgal is able to build up a high degree of suspense till the closing pages of the novel. Only Henry Brewster's long letter to Anna which reaches her only after his death in the war-front, reveals the truth about Stella's infidelity to her husband and her liaison with Robert Pryor. It is the sudden visit of Stella and Pryor to Anna's house in England that subsequently unravels the mystery. Sahgal uses this 'motif' of the letter, to throw light on the circumstances of Stella's departure and to present the 'real' image of Brewster to the readers.

Akilon also employs the 'motif' of the epistle in *Cinēkiti*. In the closing chapter of the novel, through the long letter written by Narayanasami, the husband of Lalitha, which he leaves on his table before his departure for Burma, giving his consent for the marriage of his young wife with Durai, her lover, the readers are made to understand the real moral stature of Narayanasami better than when he is visibly present
in the novel. The novel dwells at length on Lalitha's long suffering as a victim of an incompatible marriage. It is only after going through the letter, one comes to know Narayanasami better and he emerges as one who is too noble to be called as a male chauvinist. In his letter Narayanasami explains how he feels guilty and sorry for having deprived his young wife, of the sensual pleasures of life she is entitled to in youth, on account of his own impotency caused by an accident soon after his marriage. The letter also shows how broad-minded he is with regard to the consent he grants, for Lalitha's marriage with Durai. T.V.Veerasamy considers the letter as an indispensable aid to the structure of the novel:

It is quite evident that in Cinēkiti, the 'letter' is a fitting structural aid to depict the mental state of the people, and conflict of inner feelings, offering a neat solution to the complications in the plot (1977, 77).

In Akilon novels, the 'letter' is employed as an essential 'motif'. To quote Weisstein,

...motifs relate to situations.... situations, by the way, are groupings of human views, feelings or modes of behaviour, which give rise to, or result from, actions in which several individuals participate (1973, 139).
Akilon makes use of the letter as a 'motif' also in Pen (The Woman), to narrate what has happened to Santhanam in England and why he returns home throwing up his I.C.S. status. Santhanam's unstinted efforts relating to rural welfare in India are enumerated in the novel only through the letters he writes to Vathsala, his wife who refuses to accompany him. In fact, the letters of Santhanam and Subathira addressed to Vathsala add a much-needed variety to what would have been otherwise the novel's plain narrative.

It is interesting to note in this context, that the novella Avalukku (To Her) which Akilon wrote in collaboration with three other writers namely Selvam, Sona and R.V. is presented entirely in the epistolary form. Sankari's long letter to Thirugnanam in Pon Malar, also reveals in a significant flash-back, her earlier life and her affair with Thirugnanam, lending a peculiar depth to Sankari's self-portrayal in the novel.

Sahgal uses the technique of flash-back frequently in her narrative, in order to present the details relating to the past of her leading characters and to juxtapose such a past with the present. For instance,
in *This Time of Morning* Rakesh looks back with nostalgia, upon his associations with Rashmi. Similarly, the past lives of Vishal Dubey, Harpal Singh, Gyan Singh, Jit and Mara are all presented in the novel *Storm in Chandigarh* at various points in the narrative through a flash-back mode only. Simrit in *The Day in Shadow* stands bewildered and humiliated as a divorcée in the beginning of the novel, and her past unhappy married life with Som is presented in the work in an effective flash-back. Sonali in *Rich Like Us*, going through the entries in the diary of her grandfather, lives really in the past.

Akilon too employs the flash-back mode of presentation in his novels. In the opening chapter of *Putu Vellam*, Murugaiyan is seen returning home in a train after his release from prison. Using the flash-back mode, Akilon shows how he had in the past involved himself in the August Revolt of 1942 as a student, and courted arrest.

In *Pon Malar*, Dr. Sankari's past is presented in a flash-back in "Uyir Koṭuttavaṅ" ("One who gave her life"), a chapter which narrates how she had been saved by her cousin Thirugnanam when she was about to commit
suicide because of a particular crisis in her life. It is presented as a day-dream of Sankari: "She has forgotten herself in the old dreams and day-dreams about Thirugnanam" (PM 60).

Vāḻvu Enkē? talks of how Chandran cannot marry Radhai just because he is the son of a couple who opted for an inter-caste marriage long ago. In this, the history of Chandran's parents till their death, and Chandran's father's involvement in the freedom struggle in the company of his friends Sambamurthi and Rajagopalan, are presented in an interesting flash-back in chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. However, it should be acknowledged here that the lengthy reversal to the past in this work, hinders the free linear flow of the main narrative, which concerns itself mainly with Chandran's life.

With regard to plot in fiction, Marjorie Boulton has commented that "the plot is important as much as skeleton is important to a human body" (1985, 45). Weisstein says, "while plot refers to a specific content it always does so in the manner of a simplified, foreshortened account of a sequence of events" (1973, 127). To Rene Wellek, "The plot [or narrative structure] is itself composed of smaller,
narrative structures [episodes, incident]" (1968, 217).

Sahgal in her earlier novels employs several sub-plots with ever so many digressions. Eventhough *A Time To Be Happy* is the story of Sanad in its main narrative thread, several characters and incidents are added to it, as additional strands. Shyam M. Asnani considers this rightly as a failure in terms of artistic technique:

The plot has one glaring defect of being digressive and the sprawling narrative rambles to and fro. The author could have avoided irrelevance of incident and observation, and concentrated on the portrayal of important and only essential characters (16.1-11 Jan.-June 1973:41).

Perhaps Sahgal considered that such multiple sub-plots are inevitable as she needed a vast canvas to present the entire socio-political milieu of the country during a historic period.

But these minor weaknesses in no way reduce the qualitative worth of the novelist's maiden attempt at fiction writing. Moreover, such a panoramic sweep and range with multiple sub-plots can be justifiable in novels that stress the social political events of an epoch which is so crucially important in the nation's history (Asnani 1.3 (n.d):44).

Sahgal's second novel *This Time of Morning* too employs a complex narrative, consisting of different
strands. To Malhotra, "It is a novel without a clear-cut easy-to-pin-down theme or what is called plot" (1971, 222). In the novel, there are numerous threads which constitute the web. One strand is the narrative that has Kailas, Mira and their only daughter Rashmi as its primary concern. The other figures that flit around the canvas, are Salim and his unorthodox wife Saira; Arjun Mitra and his nymphomaniac wife Uma, the Narangs and their daughter Nita, and Dhiraj and his daughter Binny. In direct contrast to the conscientious politicians like Kailas Vrind, Abdul Rahman and Prakash Shukla, there are corrupt self-seeking politicians like Hari Mohan, Kalyan Sinha, Somnath and Vishnu are presented in the novel. There is also Neil Brensen, the architect of the Peace Institute. Besides these principal characters, there are several other minor characters too. Yet events in this work are correlated in a better manner than in Sahgal's previous work. A.V.Krishna Rao writes, "... the action of the novel comes to full circle, integrating the diverse characters with the kaleidoscopic environment of New Delhi" (1976, 32).

Sahgal's third novel, Storm in Chandigarh, is even better integrated, with Vishal Dubey playing the lead
role in the central narrative. Episodes dealing with the personal conflicts of two couples Jit-Mara and Inder-Saroj and the political conflict in Chandigarh are inextricably and deftly interwoven along with the principal narrative, showing Sahgal's maturing craftsmanship as a novelist. It is interesting to note that in all the novels that succeeded this, there is only one central character like Simrit in The Day in Shadow, Usman Ali in A Situation in New Delhi, Sonali in Rich Like Us, Anna Hansen in Plans for Departure and Bhushan Singh in Mistaken Identity, who all play a pivotal role in the respective novels they figure in, lending considerable unity to the respective works, reflecting in themselves all the major political, social and personal concerns of the novels. Thus there is a perceptibly growing mastery on the part of Sahgal in respect of the art of integrating the multiple threads of sub-plots with the principal narrative of the works, through the integration of themes and individual characters.

In comparison with Sahgal, Akilon's novels mostly have sample plots, and Akilon's early novels can be considered merely as lengthy short stories or novellas. Only when Akilon started serializing his novels in
journals he began adding more and more sub-plots to his work. In the case of his novel Putu Vellam, the story of Gurusami and Suguna is tagged on as a sub-plot, well integrated with the main plot that concerns itself with Murugaiyan. The episodes of Kasthuri, a childhood friend of the protagonist Durai in Cinēkiti, and that of Brinda in Vālvu Enē?, in no way distract the attention of the readers from the main narratives in both the works. The following critical remarks of Ramalingam on Akilon's works highlight this aspect of Akilon's art:

The nineteenth century Tamil novelists had a tendency to bring in too many sub-plots into their works thereby making their readers feel suffocated. But Akilon does not have this defect about him. Eventhough here and there we may have one or two sub-plots, he makes the main plot gush forth like a blood stream with all vitality and liveliness in the nerves and arteries of sub-plots (1974, 143).

Akilon's plots being simple and easy, generally follow some main sequence of events, presenting numerous characters and episodes. His great novels like Putu Vellam, Pāvai Viḷakku, Neēncin Alaikal, Cittirap Pāvai, Enē Pōkirm?, Vālvu Enē? and Pālmarak Kāṭtinilē have several characters and episodes running concurrently towards a glorious, complex conglomeration, centring around the protagonists. For
instance, in *Putu Vilōtam* there are approximately fifty characters, of whom only sixteen can be considered as main characters. *Pāvai Vilākku* is made up of different strands of episodes such as the episodes of Devaki, Cenkamalam, Gauri and Uma. All these episodes are integrated with the central character Tanikacalam who involves himself personally in their lives. Ramalingam considers, "Tanickacalam's life as a big river in spate, and the stories of the four women are like tributaries that enhance the mainstream of the river" (1974, 49).

According to Ulrich Weisstein, "for Comparative Literature 'stoff', 'theme' and 'topos' are of considerably greater interest than, for example, 'motif' and situation...." (1973, 129). Sahgal's entire fictional corpus revolves round mainly two themes. One is, the presentation of the great change that has come over India in the post-Independence era, with a political consciousness of a Nehruite. So each of her novels whether it is set in the pre- or post-Independence India, presents one of the political issues like, for instance, the freedom struggle, the linguistic bifurcation in Chandigarh, the crisis in New Delhi after Nehru's death or the aftermath of Emergency.
As regards Sahgal's fiction, it should be stressed here that political situation is not the only concern of Sahgal as a writer. She proves to be also a humanist, who is intimately concerned with the Indian woman's quest for individual freedom and identity. Both these issues form the main 'stoff' or subject matter of her fiction. With regard to the thematic concern in Sahgal's works, there seems to be almost a definite linear growth traceable, from her early novels to her later works. Sahgal's maiden novel A Time To Be Happy seems to be, by and large, an immature work of art, as she presents the women in the work as highly passive and docile, whereas in her later works her women portray more successfully the intensity of the plight of women in a male-centred world. On the whole, Sahgal's theme is rather stereo-typed as it lacks variety. Yet her works are enjoyable and meaningful as they deal with women's predicament in general, imbued with "a genuine concern for human values and human beings" (Jain 1994a, Preface).

Akilon's novels can be called social documents, as they focus on nothing else but the Tamil society. As a reformist thinker, Akilon boldly highlights the corruption in public life, social injustice, violence
and anarchy prevalent in his age in most of his works like Vālvu Enkē?, Cittirap Pāvai, Enkē Pokirōm? Putu Vellam, Vānamā Pūmiyā? and Pon Malar. The social evils which fetter the human individual, constitute the primary 'stoff' of Akilon's fiction. Weisstein approvingly quotes from Goethe to show how the entire process of creation depends on the artist's inner perceptive skill to connect: "The world liberally supplied the subject matter [stoff] while the meaning [Gehalt] arises spontaneously out of the fullness of his soul" (1973, 125).

Moreover, like Sahgal, Akilon analyses with great human concern, the marital problems of women like incompatibility in marriage, male-domination and lack of mutual understanding. Unlike Sahgal, Akilon deals with a variety of social problems in his fictional works. In Pon Malar, Putu Vellam and Enkē Pokirōm? he depicts the economic ills of the society showing how materialistic and avaricious men can be, who indulge themselves in bootlegging, adulteration, bribery, hoarding money and perpetrating acts of social injustice. In Cantippu and Vālvu Enkē?, he portrays the evils of the caste system, which stands in the way of individuals. The problems arising out of incompatible
marriages are vividly shown in Cînêkîti, Tunâivi and Cittirap Pâvai.

Exposition is the primary function of the opening of any novel. Usually, the opening chapter is devoted to the purpose of introducing the characters and the setting of the novel. Sahgal's *A Time To Be Happy* begins with Sanad seeking the narrator's opinion regarding his idea of resigning his job in a British firm. This offers a fine cue to the narrator to introduce all the major personages connected with Sanad, the protagonist, and provide a background of the times. Sahgal skilfully introduces the theme of her work often in the very first opening sentence as can be seen in *Storm in Chandigarh*: "Violence lies very close to the surface in the Punjab" (5). Uttered by the Home Minister, the sentence puts in a nut shell, the 'stoff' of the entire novel which depicts in detail, a political crisis in Chandigarh resulting in violence everywhere.

Similarly, *A Situation in New Delhi* commences with the sentence "Shivraj was dead" (5), a newspaper item, read by Michael Calvert. The sentence introduces the
reason for the chaotic situation in the capital city, which forms the theme of the novel.

In the opening chapters of Rich Like Us and Plans for Departure, Sahgal "creates a context into which persons and previous events are subsequently fitted as into a mosaic" (Anklasaria 1990, 37). Both the novels open with two persons engaged in the process of eating and drinking. One is a foreigner who sees things with the vigilant, sharpened perception of an outsider. Rich Like Us opens with a scene in Devikin's house where Neuman, a foreign guest and collaborator in the proposed Happyola factory is hosted to a dinner by Dev. While Neuman and Dev discuss the Indian obsession with imported things, Rose comes in and recounts to Neuman about their life in Lahore before the partition of 1947. Rose's talk suddenly brings in the events of the past and as she makes a comparison of her husband's mode of clinching business deals and Dev's mode of working them out, the readers are led into the core of the subject matter ('stoff') of the novel.

Similarly, Plans for Departure opens dramatically with "Sir Nitin Basu, poking at the lumpy cutlet on his plate" (11) while the foreign lady "Miss Anna Hansen
was eating a curious-looking concoction of nasturtium seeds, mint and unidentifiable leaves and grasses” (11). They discuss their diet and, gradually, the omniscient author introduces them and the other characters of the novel. Sahgal's opening chapters not only serve the purpose of exposition but also set the context in which she elaborates her larger thematic content.

Akilon too uses the introductory chapters in his fiction for exposition, and setting the context and the tone for the 'stoff'. For instance, Inpa Ninaivu starts with the prison scene where Ramanathan and his prison mate Subbiah are engaged in a discussion on 'woman', expressing contradictory views. While Ramanathan exalts the 'woman' to the level of a 'goddess', Subbiah berates her. This heated argument in the opening lines makes the readers curious to know all the facts regarding the life story of Kamala.

Vālvu Enkē? opens with the description of the long awaited marriage of Chandran and Radhai. In the opening chapter, Akilon talks about the possible obstacles in respect of their marriage and even poses the question as to whether this marriage would take place without any
hitch. This suggestion of anxiety on the part of the writer unsettles the readers and makes them anticipate further opposition to the marriage of Chandran and Radhai.

Putu Vellam introduces Murugaiyan, the protagonist, in a dramatic manner, jostling for a seat in a third class compartment amidst an unruly crowd of passengers, while Muniyandi, the rickshaw-puller who has brought his family along with him finds it difficult to find his way in. Murugaiyan with characteristic kindness, rushes forth to help Muniyandi's family while the passengers surrounding them either keep yelling at them or look at them with indifference. Though very young, Murugaiyan is self-confident, and bravely tells his name to the railway-guard who reprimands him for stopping the train by pulling the chain to enable Muniyandi's household, to board the moving vehicle. The train itself with its combination of first class and third class compartments, is symbolic of life as represented in the novel. It is interesting to read Akilon's own account of the use of the metaphor:

In the very first two chapters the summary of the story emerges to the surface as a metaphor. The rest of the novel is a mere explanation of the metaphor. Life, like the train, offers high
class comforts for some and low class pains for many. In spite of this fundamental social injustice, the powerful tend to lay siege on even the little comforts of the poor...

In spite of this fundamental social injustice, the powerful tend to lay siege on even the little comforts of the poor...

Political authority too is a part to such a state of affairs. Murugaiyan rebels against such a tendency in society (Packiamuthu ed. 1974, 63).

Thus in the opening chapter itself Akilon introduces the main theme of the novel.

Even the titles of works chosen by Sahgal and Akilon set out before us, symbolically, the themes of the respective novels. In Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* the political storm raging outside, is symbolic of the deeper crises in the marital lives of Saroj and Inder, Mara and Jit, and Leela and Vishal Dubey, all presented against the context of the linguistic bifurcation of the states of Punjab and Haryana. Susheela P. Rajendra has already pointed out the metaphoric use of the 'storm':

The metaphorical expression of 'storm' in the novel works at two levels: one the political, following on the partition of Punjab into two states and two, the personal or emotional crisis in the marital conflicts that a husband can cause violence to his wife or vice versa (1993, 175).
Bala Kothandaraman also shares the same view:

The 'storm' in the novel works on two planes -- one, the political, following on the bifurcation of the Punjab into Punjab and Haryana, with Chandigarh as the common capital; and two, the emotional crises in the marital relations of the various characters (2.1 (1974-'75): 27).

Thus, Sahgal uses a natural phenomenon as a symbol in this novel successfully.

In a similar manner, Akilon uses the imagery of 'flood' -- another natural disaster --, as a metaphoric title for his novel Putu Vellam which means 'the sudden spate'. In this novel 'Gandhism' is symbolically referred to, as a 'flood' that has come to overturn the false values of slavery, corruption and other social evils prevalent in Indian society along with a promise of resurgence. Akilon himself interprets the metaphor in the following manner:

Just then the great flood of consciousness of liberty was rushing forward, foaming, flooding and dashing forth from Kanyakumari in the south unto the Himalayas in the north. It was not a flood to dislocate the lives of the people living in peace; it was a great flood of Truth, which had come to root out the bonds of slavery and corruption. It had not come to carry away the utensils and thatched huts of the poor. On the contrary, it was a sacred
flood offering a new spirit and a new life to our society which was heading towards disaster. That was the human flood, called Mahatma; an immense sacrificial flood! (Putu Vellam 23)

It is this metaphor of the 'flood' that constitutes the dominant and recurrent 'motif' in the novel. 'Flood' is repeatedly referred to as the flow of Time in the novel:

The flood of Time was running at an uncontrollable speed. But Man continued to throb with anxiety to control it and make the great life on this earth fertile. The 'flood' never ceased and Man too was tireless in his endeavour (574).

According to Weisstein,

'motif' designates a smaller thematic unit which does not yet encompass an entire plot or story line but in itself constitutes an element pertaining to content and situation (1973, 138).

For instance, in Sahgal's Plans for Departure, 'departure' is the recurrent 'motif', operating at different levels. The title of the novel links the different characters -- Anna Hansen, the Crofts, the Brewsters and Nitin Basu --, as all of them plan to depart from Himapur, being 'birds of passage'. They all
share a common anxiety over their imminent departure, as Zerin Anklasaria rightly points out:

They are all birds of passage in Himapur and must return to plains before the monsoon breaks, as the British must leave India some day. The plans that they are constantly making for departure show that all of them are essentially aliens and bring out the ephemeral nature of their mutual association (1990, 40).

In the closing part of the novel, Anna is seen in her death-bed, and is planning for another kind of departure. Thus, the novel achieves a certain structural unity through the 'motif' of 'departure'.

Akilon's *Enke Pokirom?* asks through a rhetorical question, where we, in free India, are heading. The title itself, becomes the chief 'motif' in the novel. Akilon describes what inspired him to write this novel in its preface:

> Where are we going? What is the country heading towards? — These questions arose in me in 1957 itself, just ten years after the nation had attained her freedom (3).

This novel vividly portrays the deteriorated socio-political state of the nation run by self-seeking, power-mongering and corrupt politicians. The fact that
the nation has deviated from the Gandhian path is amply revealed through Ramalingam in the novel. To Abdul Saleem, who asks him the question "Where is the nation heading towards now?", he replies, "It is quite certain that it is not destined towards Gandhi" (221).

The title of Akilon's Pāvai Vilakku sets before the readers, symbolically, the principal 'motif' of the novel. 'Pavai Vilakku' is an eternally glowing lamp, which stands for perpetual love. Akilon presents in this novel Tanikacalam the central character and his relationships with four women namely Devaki, Cenkamalam, Gauri and Uma, who all take their respective turn in shedding their different lights on the protagonist. This symbolic kind of interpretation is suggested in the preface to the work itself:

..... I had a wonderful vision and a sensational experience. In front of me I saw a cool bright ray of light, instead of Tanikacalam. I had a vision of four women carrying together in their tender hands a clay-lamp..... The four ladies merged into one another and became two. Then the two merged and became one soon, and the same became a maiden lamp.... (7-8).

G.Vijayavenugopal in his article "Symbolism in Pāvai Vilakku" explains the process of identification of the
four characters with Tanikacalam thus:

Devaki is described as the one who discovered and helped Tanikacalam to realise his ideal mission in life; Cenkamalam is the one who has inspired him with that mission through creative writing; Gauri formed the basis for this mission, namely, the link between the ideal and earthly life, and Uma, who took the responsibility of holding both the ideal and the base. What happened to Tanikacalam? He is the flame, the symbol of love representing the ideal (1976, 374).

Discussing a textual analysis of Pāvai Vilakku V. Sachithanandan observes that in the progress of the artist-protagonist, a woman always appears as a source of greater enlightenment:

..... Devaki makes him feel conscious of his artistic potentialities. The beautiful Cenkamalam ..... arouses the artist in Tanikacalam ..... his most glorious visions are rooted in the base of life and such a base for him, is silently and efficiently provided by Gauri, the only blood-relations of the hero among the four women ..... and finally, Uma brings into harmony, the intractable man and the sensitive artist in Tanikacalam (1976, 343).

Akilon's Pon Malar (The Golden Flower) too carries a symbolic title. Dr Sankari, the protagonist, is the 'ponmalar' by which he means the fragrant screw pine
flower (talampu). K.V. Jeganathan writes:

By 'Ponmalar' Akilon means only the fragrant screw pine flower which does not easily wither, drapes itself in gold and spreads its fragrance far and wide (Kalaimakal Dec. 1964).

In the novel, Thirugnanam, a cousin of Sankari tells her:

When I think of you, I cannot help recalling the fragrant screw pine flower. I wonder at times, whether gold itself has blossomed into a flower in you, for it lacks the fragility that wastes away in a few seconds while it exudes a wonderful fragrance which gold does not possess. You are such a fragrance-filled golden flower, the sweet-smelling screw pine flower (196).

And the novelist describes the fragrant screw pine flower in the following terms in his preface to the novel:

Have you ever come across clusters of thickets of screw pine dwelling in the richness of darkness and thorns? It is out of such a thick and deep darkness that the flower of the fragrant screw pine flashes forth. Strangely enough, it is the rich gloom of the thicket that endows such a sweet fragrance to that golden flower that burns with such a brilliance (3).
Sankari is a motherless child, who faces several hardships in her life, and life, to her is little more than a thorny thicket. Seduced, and later rejected by her lover Gurumurthi, she still simply refuses to give up. Amidst such thorn-filled experiences of her life, she emerges bright like the fragrant screw pine flower spreading her golden fragrance in the society at large. Ramalingam sees in Sankari the twin qualities of the fragrant screw pine:

Sankari has two distinct natures about her even as the fragrant screw pine flower, which presents beauty as well as thorns. Endowed with such sharp thorns, she emerges as capable of dissecting and healing the fistulous ulcer of society (1974, 95).

Akilon gives yet another explanation to 'ponmalar' in the preface:

Isn't gold hidden always under the scum of stones and mud of the earth? Dissolved in water, melted in fire, smelted in the forge and calcinated in ever so many ways it becomes, eventually, transformed into gold. How many blows does the artist who makes a flower out of it deal, with his hammer on the anvil of its heart to enhance its glamour? .... Dr. Sankari is such a new flower shaped out of gold (3-4).
Sankari is smelted into a golden flower that she is, through her sufferings and conflicts. Akilon's imagery here is highly poetical.

Thus, Sahgal and Akilon have employed symbolic phrases as titles for their novels, which lend colour and depth to their respective works.

Further, imagery is often employed in fiction as a means of expression, reinforcement and illustration. Critics like Qaiser Zoha Alam have commented on the liberal use of imagery from nature in Indian fiction in general: "Romanticism is writ large on Indian writing in English and many of these writers treat nature as a dictionary from which they borrow their images" (1994, 18).

Sahgal makes an effective use of imagery from nature in her fiction. In A Time To Be Happy, in order to show how Govind Narayan's children and Madan Sahai's children are brought up, she uses a metaphor from the world of horticulture:

The children were neither too well cared for nor too wild.... Compared with the carefully clipped hedges and beautiful flower-beds of
Govind Narayan's garden with its exquisite, expensive blooms imported from Europe, the Sahais' was a tangle of colour that had sprung up in obedience to no particular design (TH 169-170).

Also in This Time of Morning Kalyan is described as follows: "in the muted atmosphere of Boston he stood out like thorn cactus in a flower-bed" (58) and in A Situation in New Delhi Sahgal uses a related imagery:

What she [Devi] missed was the sense of values Shivraj had planted like roses with his two hands. It was their fragrance,... that had bound the country together in a unity (42).

Akilon too uses imagery from the sphere of horticulture. In Pen he symbolically presents Vathsala's excessive mania for anything made abroad, by bringing in the imagery of her planting foreign plants, in the place of native rose and jasmine. Vathsala's delight at sending her husband Santhanam to England to acquire a foreign degree, is pictured employing the following imagery: "The foreign laburnum tree she had planted flourished fast and started blossoming in huge lusty bunches" (47). Again, when Vathsala receives the message that Santhanam has discarded the foreign degree, Akilon describes the scene using a similar
imagery, symbolically suggestive of the shattering of Vathsala's dreams:

There arose suddenly a whirlwind outside the window in the garden, around the laburnum tree, and the leaves, boughs, shoots and blossoms of the tree had a hard time of it (50).

When Santhanam throws himself into the freedom struggle, Akilon refers to his newborn fanaticism symbolically as follows:

The foreign laburnum which she had planted and cultivated for him, is no longer a tall heap of delightful blossoms as before. It seemed to have been transformed into a leaping bunch, vomiting fire jutting out its merciless tongues in a horrifying fashion (68).

The recurrent use of horticultural imagery in the novel renders it symbolic, serving as an illustration for the distinction Rene Wellek makes between symbol on the one hand and image and metaphor on the other:

An image may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation it becomes a symbol (1968, 189).
The imagery of the 'Whirlwind' is used again for Vathsala as a metaphor in Akilon's Pen:

Beyond any doubt, Vathsala is a whirlwind. Usually, a whirlwind comes suddenly from somewhere, encircles a man for a second and then disappears pursuing its own course. Vathsala is not such a whirlwind. She is a whirlwind which will stay put in a spot and swirl round and round the potential victim and suffocate him in the clutches of her centre (28).

In another context of the same novel, the 'new flood' is employed as a telling simile: "Santhanam disembarked at the port of Bombay and looked for Vathsala with love surging in him, and gushing forth like a foaming new flood" (51).

Akilon also uses the image of the sea symbolically in his Neănca Alaikal:

Just like big and small waves of the sea that dash against the shore again and again, Vasu's mind was rocked alternatively with the waves of memories of Kanaga and Pushpa (134).

In fact, the imagery of the sea recurs in six different places in the same novel, eventually ending up as a symbol.
Akilon has the habit of employing the imagery of the flower guarded by thorns, as symbolic of women in his fiction. The flowers such as rose, lotus, jasmine, champak and the fragrant screw pine are used as symbolic and metaphoric images in several of his novels such as Inpa Niṇaiyu, Cantippu, Cinēkiti, Pon Malar, Cittirap Pāvai, Pāvai Viḷakku and Vālēvu Eṅkē?. Thus Akilon proves himself to be a conscious craftsman, who succeeds in his deployment of imagery from 'nature' and 'horticulture' in his fiction.

Both Sahgal and Akilon employ animal imagery for conveying the emotions, feelings and moods of their characters as accurately as possible. As for Sahgal's use of such animal imagery, the following extracts from her fiction may suffice:

Harilal gazed at her with a longing look I had seen only on a spaniel's face when it looked wistfully at a titbit just out of reach (TH 257).

The wretch was quivering like a cornered rat, Weatherby saw with disgust (TH 128).

Together they belonged to the vast sick multitude who bore their lot like beasts of burden and when it became too much for them, lay down and died (TTM 76).
In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Saroj feels the flutter of the foetus within her womb, and imagines "the sensation of a butterfly held in cupped hands" (46) and also when Harpal's car passes through the crowd "... one or two hundred of them, thumping and beating against his car like frenzied bats' wings" (240).

In *The Day in Shadow* the following animal imagery are seen:

May be she [Sirnrit] had always been an animal, only a nice, obedient domestic one, sitting on a cushion, doing as she was told. And in return she had been fed and sheltered. Now she mustn't whine if they threw stones at her, or even a killing boulder like the Consent Terms (57). The corpus, a fat, hideous, bloated monster, swelling fit to burst, crowded her imagination. The dynosaurus at least had died of their size. This monstrosity would feed and thrive on her (59).

...... we're crammed into it like sardines (59).

Sonali in *Rich Like Us* says:

They were just waiting to catch me like flying fish are caught when they leap out of the waves (55).

And when Kachru became 'the boy' I was caught and pinned like a butterfly by his mother's fond looks (55).
In the same novel, Dev commands, "Stop behaving like a headless chicken" (24) and also,

Nishi kept turning eagerly to Rose like a child will, or a frisky puppy that romps ahead and looks back invitingly, head on one side (79).

In Plans for Departure for Lulu Croft, her husband, "with his hair plastered down (he) looked like a huge wet dog" (145) and in the same novel, Marlowe "waited about meek as a lamb, for the D.M. to take action" (23). In Mistaken Identity, "Sylla came when she wanted to, like the independent green-eyed cat she was" (121).

Akilon also employs animal imagery in his fiction like Sahgal. In Tunāivi, Kalyani describes the spring thus:

The neems which had shed off all their leaves and appeared to stand with the bare horns of antlers, stand today as new brides clad in their fresh green sprouts and decked in rich white bunches of blooms (7).

In the same novel, Shantha thinking about her love for Balu says:

At times, I stood wrapped in passionate dreams
like a toddler extending his little hand from the very place he stands and trying to catch the butterfly draped in multiple colours (81).

and Sundari turns into "a tigress, thwarted in the course of her meal" (113).

We come across an episode in Putu Vellam where, "Murugaiyan took the two kids standing on the platform and dumped them like chicks into the carriage" (13) and also, a thug is likened "to a hound that stands guard for his master's seat sulking, his tail tucked between his hind legs" (19).

In Cittirap Pāvai, "In the newspaper shop the students [awaiting their results] crowd like houseflies around a jackfruit split open" (27). In the latter part of the same novel, Ananthi is described as "a little breathless ant caught in a spider's web, with the web, slowly and steadily encircling and strangling her" (478) and Annamalai is pictured as "a tiny fish caught in a fishing rod and thrown breathless on the shore with the throat cut open with indifference" (485).
In another novel *Vânama Pûmiyâ?*, Gandhi refers to the school children flying about happily as "little sparrows who got freedom from their imprisonment, in the unhealthy aviaries of the Madras city" (56).

Thus, both Sahgal and Akilon employ in their works striking images to convey the inner feelings of their characters. They use the imagery from nature, animals and horticulture in their fiction, often for the elucidation of what they want to emphasize, and to express their own comments on situations. For these writers, imagery is an important vehicle of perception, as Rene Wellek points out:

The visual image is a sensation or a perception, but it also 'stands for', refers to, something invisible, something 'inner'. It can be both presentation and representation at once (1968, 188).

Both Sahgal and Akilon use striking and apt images which are original, vivid and often imaginative and thought-provoking. Their images show the writers' keen observations. There is a more pronounced greater tinge of Indianness in the matter of images in Akilon than in Sahgal. Akilon brings in Indian flowers, fruits and symbols of tradition like 'Pavai Vilakku' to present
the Indianness of his characters and to express his own Indian sensibility.

Akilon is more symbolic and lyrical in his presentation of images in his fiction than Sahgal. The poetic element in Akilon enhances the quality of his works making them linger long in the hearts and minds of his readers. As already discussed, the very titles of some of Akilon's novels are nothing but significant images which are integrally related to the situations, characters and events in the respective novels. Thus, his imagery is not merely ornamental, but forms an integral part of his fictional art.

As for characterisation, Sahgal, generally, presents an affluent cross-section of the upper class Indian society. Her fictional world is filled with political leaders, business tycoons, foreigners, industrialists running multi-national firms, landlords, journalists, eminent academics, Ambassadors, Ministers, Vice-Chancellors, in short, the uppermost crust of the Indian milieux.

Shyamala A. Narayan makes a perceptive remark with regard to the choice of the social class Sahgal writes
about:

Sahgal scrupulously sticks to the people she knows intimately; she does not try to write about the caste-ridden middle class or the poor Indian villagers just to conform with the accepted image of India (1988, 268).

The above comment makes an indirect stricture on the subject intentionally Sahgal chose to write about. It has to be conceded that, to some extent, Sahgal tries to avoid washing the dirty linen in public like, for instance, open discussion on issues relating to caste system in the Indian middle class, keeping constantly in mind merely her elite, highbrow audience, particularly those living abroad. Nevertheless, in The Day in Shadow, Simrit's Brahmin parents oppose her marriage with Som which is outside their caste. Rich Like Us presents Sahgal's sharp criticism of her own people, the Kashmiri Brahmins. The caste-conscious mothers of Sonali and Ravi Kachru, being typical Kashmiri Brahmins, try hard to arrange Sonali's marriage with Ravi Kachru. To them, "A marriage joined from top to bottom by caste, community and background, ... was the best"(56). Sonali's mother is proud to see that they were destined to rule free India. Sonali describes with ironic undertones, how her mother and
Bhabijan, Ravi Kachru's mother, consider Lal Bhadur Sastri becoming the Prime Minister as, the most ridiculous development.... At least one could hold up one's head with a distinguished-looking Kashmiri Brahmin Prime Minister, but here was this shrimp who was a Kayasth as well, and filling up the secretariat with Kayasths (166).

In contrast, on the whole, Akilon's characters belong to the common run of the society in Tamil Nadu. The business men, bureaucrats and politicians figuring in his novels cannot in any sense be called leaders of society, often becoming targets of his criticism. In Enkē Pōkirmē, Putu Vellam, Pon Malar and Cantippu rich business men and politicians busily indulge themselves in corruption, bribery and gross misdeeds perpetrating social injustice. Hence, their materialistic decadence becomes the ultimate target of Akilon's criticism.

Like Sahgal, Akilon too has tended to draw his fictional characters from his personal world, a fact he acknowledges in Kataik Kalai (The Art of Story Telling):

I do not struggle hard looking for my fictional characters. The men who affect me
deeply among those living around me tend to become characters in my fiction (1972, 75).

Thus, with their intimate first-hand knowledge of men and women, Sahgal and Akilon present life-like portrayals of characters figuring in realistic human situations, drawn with an amazing degree of authenticity.

"Character portrayal takes place in a number of ways in Sahgal's novels" claims Jasbir Jain (1994a, 90). In Sahgal's novels, character portrayal is done through multifarious devices like authorial comments, reminiscences in the form of flash-backs, direct portrayal of events from life situations and through a sheer exposition of thought processes in the guise of interior monologues and observations. Jasbir Jain observes:

Nayantara Sahgal obviously believes that environmental influences are important influences on character and she provided details of the early lives of her characters...... While narrating the early influences through flash-backs, reminiscences or direct narration she feels free to comment directly on characters (1994a, 90-91).
Sahgal also juxtaposes characters selecting some endowed with contrary dispositions. For instance, in *This Time of Morning*, Kalyan with his anti-Gandhian ideas, stands in contrast to Kailas, a genuine protagonist of Gandhian ideology, and in *Storm in Chandigarh* Harpal Singh and Gyan Singh on the one hand, and Jit and Inder on the other are contrasted effectively. In Sahgal’s fiction, they function as foils to each other. Almost every novel of Sahgal also carries the central ‘motif’ of a woman character who is presented as a victim pitted against her victimiser, in the form of some male chauvinist or other.

Akilon too adopts methods similar to those adopted by Sahgal for the portrayal of his characters. His protagonists boldly wage a relentless war against the evils of the society around. According to M. Ramalingam,

All the protagonists of Akilon can be called ‘positive heroes’. By nature, they are endowed with qualities of industry, self-confidence, social concern, inner feeling for struggle and social awareness. All of them aspire for the creation of a bright world to come (1974, 149–150).

Moreover, Akilon uses symbolic phrases to describe his characters. For instance, Vathsala in *Pen* is a
'whirlwind', Lalitha in Cinēkiti and Raḏhai in Vālyu Ēṅkē? are 'fire' and Dr. Sankari in Pon Malar is a 'fragrant screw pine flower' and so on.

In the classification of characters Rene Wellek talks of 'flat' and 'round' characters and defines them as follows:

Flat characterisation presents a single trait seen as the dominant or socially most obvious trait. It may be caricature or may be abstractive idealization. 'Round' characterisation like 'dynamic' requires space and emphasis (1968, 219).

In the light of the above view, Sahgal's fiction may be described as presenting a considerable number of 'flat' characters, since only some of them are really allowed to 'grow'. As her two early novels present a wide range of characters and networks of very complex plots, there is no scope in them for an in-depth study of the development of characters. With reference to A Time To Be Happy, M.N. Sarma rightly observes:

... except for Sanad, all the other characters are types -- picturesque 'Natives' viewed with the comic detachment of the uninvolved caricaturist (Vol. 4 Jan., 1976: 37).
Also to Jasbir Jain, "the novel is so overpopulated that it is not possible to... allow the characters grow. The novel reads more like a memoir" (1994a, 69) and, to Meenakshi Mukerjee, it is "not a successful novel, but merely an interesting social document depicting the educated upper class people" (1971, 51). Kai Nicholson makes the following comment on Sahgal's second novel, This Time of Morning: "... as a work of fiction, the novel is not successful. Mrs. Sahgal does not seem to care much about her characters...." (1972, 167). Thus, Sahgal's characters in the early novels, with the exception of Sanad and Rakesh are, by and large, social types remaining merely as shadowy figures.

However, in her mature works of art as in Storm in Chandigarh, Sahgal does succeed in creating some characters who grow along with the development of plot. According to Jasbir Jain,

Storm in Chandigarh is perhaps Nayantara Sahgal's most successful novel from the point of view of characterization. The reader is able to see them actually try to understand themselves and grow out of their limitations. Saroj, Mara and Dubey are changed beings by the end of the novel (1994a, 79).
As regards characterisation in *The Day in Shadow*, Simrit is not much of an individual, though she is convincingly portrayed as a victim of her circumstances. She is presented only as a divorcee reeling under the problems posed by a rigorous divorce settlement.

Devi, the sister of Shivraj in *A Situation in New Delhi* is perhaps Sahgal's weakest heroine. Uma Banerjee calls her "A performing puppet she remains without individuality or sensibility, a caricature of a career politician of the modern era" (1993, 201).

As against such one-dimensional caricatures, Anna Hansen in *Plans for Departure*, the foreign woman in Himapur who wins the love of Nicholas Wyatt whom she eventually marries and later becomes the mother of his son and ends up as a grandmother and a successful politician, is an outstanding 'round' character in Sahgal.

As regards characterisation, Akilon presents several well-developed 'round' characters in his fiction. Several of his characters grow along with the denouement of his plots. Beyond any shade of doubt,
Akilon's characters like Santhanam, Murugaiyan, Vasu, Tanikacalam, Cenhamalam, Uma, Anandhi, Vathsala, Balu, Kalyani, Murugesan, Laltha, Durai -- to name only a very few -- are 'round' personalities.

It is also true that there are some characters in Akilon's works who can pass for mere caricatures. Marjorie Boulton calls such characters 'types' and writes:

He may be more a spokesman than a true character; express the viewpoint of a social class; articulate some moral or philosophical or religious concept; be a mouthpiece for the author's own views (1985, 77).

In Akilon's works, for example, the protagonist Murugaiyan's uncle Kumaravelu, a business tycoon, accumulating great wealth through some crooked means; Chitra's materialistic brother Manickam; her avaricious grandfather Nallamuthu and the contractor Mannarsami, a counterfeit in Putu Vellam, are all caricatures of social parasites. Muniyandi, the rickshaw-puller of the same novel, his wife Velammal, the comedian Gurusamy, Suguna, the clerk Sundaram, and his wife Meenakshi are representatives of the lower and poorer section of the society living under the oppression of the rich.
Characters like Ganesan, Subash, Ragavan and Muruganantham, the politician in *Eṉkē Pōkirōm?* are caricatured as protesting against the injustice and corruption in Ponniah's government. Sundari in *Cittirap Pāvai* and Stella in *Pen* are perhaps just social types of modern, pleasure-loving women.

Akilon's object as a novelist, is not simply to delineate characters, but to present such a variety on his fictional canvas as to suggest a picture of a vast substratum of the entire Indian society. For instance, in *Pāvai Vilakkū*, the four women who figure in the protagonist's life not only contribute to the development of his character alone but stand for the four different types of women in the society at large. Devaki stands for the young widows; Cenkamalam for the shameful victims of the 'devadasi' system; Gauri, the conventional Indian wives; Uma, the emerging new women in India. Thus, Akilon's great novels are peopled with several fully realised, and yet highly symbolic, memorable characters. Ramalingam explains how Akilon excels in describing the inner feelings of his characters:

Akilon dwells briefly on the outer appearance of his characters. But he takes much pains to
describe accurately, the dynamic stream of their inner feelings as though seen through a microscope. Akilon has few equals in skilfully and minutely describing the inner states of characters (1974, 151).

It is perfectly safe to claim that Akilon's fiction has more 'round' characters than 'flat' characters who in any case are indispensable in the case of any fictional art preoccupied with social progress. Akilon admits:

My fictional characters are not utterly devoid of evil or crookedness. Such characters do figure as secondary or minor characters. Society consists of a variety of men. Among them only the heroes and heroines of my fictional works can be considered as reflecting the writer's views (1972, 111).

In respect of style, Sahgal is imbued with the rare combination of creative capability and communicative skill and shows a higher degree of maturity and refinement in the use of English language. As most of her fictional characters are the elite upper class men and women of India who think and talk in English, she does not have much difficulty in presenting their views in a natural manner.

Sahgal's views regarding the use of a 'real language' in fiction, are expressed through the
character of Jeevan in This Time of Morning:

Stories are about things that happen, about real people and they have to be written in real language... you must... not cramp and squeeze language into artificial moulds (120).

Shyam M. Asnani remarks: "Her English, better than that of many average British writers, is marked by lucidity, precision and perspicuity" (1.3 (n.d): 42). It is true that Sahgal makes a liberal use of Hindi words in her autobiographical works, her first novel A Time To Be Happy and in her later novels like Rich Like Us and Mistaken Identity and she has provided for each of these a much-needed glossary.

To Jasbir Jain the employment of native language in Sahgal's fiction is,

not impelled by any feeling of inadequacy in English as a language, but by a desire to provide authenticity of locale and in order to capture the humour of a typical Indian situation (1994a, 95),

Sahgal discards the use of Hindi words in her other works, by deliberately choosing accurate and effective English words in order to express what she wants to. In
an interview, she tells Mohini her priorities in respect of language used in fiction: "I am very picky and meticulous about the use of words. I hate verbosity and florid descriptions. I go for brevity and essence" (25.1(1990):69).

Sahgal's linguistic competence is quite evident in her picturesque descriptions of places, events and people. One such passage can be seen in her This Time of Morning:

Celia Rand's drawing-room was alright with spring flowers. Delicate pinks, blues and yellows bloomed against the silver-grey of curtains and chair covers. Though it was spring it was cold and a fire glowed in the grate. Tea was laid before it, heavy Georgian silver and fine bone china gleaming in the firelight (61).

Sahgal uses an extravagant and flamboyant style in her early novels but in her later works, she tends to employ a delicate and effective use of symbols and a lucid and unobtrusive language. Irony and subtle humour also can be seen in her later novels.

Akilon uses a very simple and lucid Tamil for his fictional works. He resorts to neither an artificial
language nor a colloquial idiom. M. Ramalingam commends Akilon on his simple style:

Delightful simplicity, fertility of thoughts, density of feeling and lucidity are the special features of Akilon’s style. His manner of handling the language has the magnetic power of fascinating the readers (1974, 77).

As Akilon’s novels mostly aim at social criticism, he often uses irony and humour effectively in order to drive his points home. The language he assigns to each character is appropriate to his/her station in life and to his respective situation and this, in a large measure, contributes considerably to the charming realism of his works. However, in doing so, Akilon never resorts to the use of colloquialism. Instead, he manipulates his language in such a subtle manner that it does not, in any way, lose its realism or clarity. For example, in Valvu Enkē? he presents the chronicle of a Brahmin family, though, he never uses the Tamil Brahminical, regional dialect in it. Only in unavoidable circumstances, does he use the regional dialect in a limited way, by way of lending realism to his work. This shows Akilon’s skill as an artist as an original user of the Tamil language, who scrupulously avoids compromising with colloquialism.
The question of audience to whom the novels are addressed, also plays a vital role in the choice of the writers' medium and style. Her medium being English, Sahgal addresses her works to a wide range of elite readers within and beyond the borders of India, whereas Akilon the Tamil writer writes for a limited audience, most of whom understand only Tamil. However, in the case of Akilon, this is not a limitation or a handicap since several of his novels have been translated into English and other Indian languages and have reached many readers. It should be noted that Prema Nandakumar has translated into English Akilon's Cittirap Pāvai as The Portrait of A Lady. Several of Akilon's novels have been filmed and dramatised as T.V. serials, thereby reaching a much wider audience.